



Inside Congress

by United States Representative George R. Nethercutt, Jr.

For the week ending March 1, 2002

Welcome to this week's edition of Inside Congress. I am glad to share with you a little of my work in the national legislature. Please follow the listed links or contact my office for more information on the topics mentioned here.

FUNDING TO FIGHT METH WILL DRAMATICALLY INCREASE

Local agencies in eastern Washington are expected to receive approximately \$1.3 million for treatment, law enforcement, and community education in Washington state's fight against methamphetamine abuse.

The news comes as a result of my work with other officials to determine how a \$4 million FY02 appropriation for fighting meth will be spent.

I felt that too much money was being spent on administrative costs, and not enough was getting where the real need was: local treatment and law enforcement. I also feel that in order for the current program to be successful statewide, local groups from across the state must feel that their interests are represented. Community solutions are critical to solving these problems. I'm pleased that eastern Washington will get more funding for treatment and services than it has in the past.

The scourge of meth is a growing problem in the 5th District. The number of meth labs in Spokane County grew from 137 to 248 between 2000 and 2001. In Stevens County the increase was worse, nearly quadrupling from four to 15 during the same period. In 2000, Pend Oreille and Ferry counties had the highest per capita number of meth labs and dumpsites according to the state's Department of Ecology.

Federal funding controlled by local officials to fight meth in eastern Washington in FY01 was just \$210,000 -- earmarked only for law enforcement in Yakima and Spokane counties.

This year, a 600 percent increase in funding is expected. The City of Spokane, in addition to Spokane, Stevens, Pend Oreille and Ferry counties represent the areas in the 5th Congressional District to receive this new funding for law enforcement.

In addition, eastern Washington is expected to receive \$292,500 for treatment and family services, which is half of the state's \$595,000 share. Community education and prevention spending is expected to be \$80,000 in the 5th Congressional District.

One of the reasons more can be spent on treatment is that administrative costs were cut in half from the previous year, a savings of almost \$100,000.

Methamphetamine production and use is devastating to our communities. Local communities are in need of assistance to fight this problem. I'm glad we were able to secure more money for treatment, education and law enforcement across Washington state, and eastern Washington in particular, where meth is a growing problem.

INFORMATION ON HIGH SCHOOL ROCKET BUILDING CONTEST

In celebration of the centennial of powered flight in 2003, the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) has teamed up with the national Association of Rocketry to sponsor the "Team America Rocketry Challenge," a rocket design and launch contest for U.S. high school students. The five winning students teams will share a total prize pool of approximately \$50,000 in savings bonds. Their school's science department will share in \$9,000 cash. The challenge involves designing, building and flying a multi-stage model rocket weighing less than 3.3 pounds at liftoff carrying a pay-load of two raw eggs and an electronic altimeter as close as possible to 1500 feet. The winners will be determined at a fly-off competition in Northern Virginia in April 2003. More information on this can be found at: <http://aia-aerospace.org>. I encourage science teachers and students to look into the competition.

LEGISLATION

This week I became a cosponsor of H.Con.Res. 317. This bill expresses the sense of Congress that the President should open a dialog with the Government of Canada to discuss the smuggling of large quantities of pseudoephedrine -- a primary ingredient in methamphetamine -- into the United States.

Last month, federal drug agents broke up a major international drug ring with roots in California, Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota. The bust resulted in more than 300 arrests, the seizure of more than 30 tons of pseudoephedrine, 181 pounds of meth and \$16 million in cash, and the closure of nine meth super-labs. The criminal organization used tractor-trailers to haul pseudoephedrine pills from Canada to the United States. Once in the US, the pseudoephedrine was shipped to clandestine labs in California.

Currently, Canada lacks a comprehensive legislative framework for addressing the pseudoephedrine trafficking problem. Without greater cooperation from Canadian authorities, the illicit diversion of pseudoephedrine tablets will continue unabated and the pills will continue to find their way to ready meth-producing markets in the United States.

ON THE FLOOR

Here is a recap of the legislative activity for the week:

H.R. 1542, Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act of 2001, known as Tauzin-Dingell. The bill passed by a vote of 273-157. I voted no.

The legislation would allow the regional Bell telephone service providers (often called "Baby Bells"), such as Qwest and Verizon, to provide deregulated high-speed Internet access without having to first demonstrate that their local telephone markets have been opened to competition. I support efforts to enhance access to high-speed Internet service, but I was concerned that the bill would not deliver the promised benefits of this technology to rural parts of Washington state.

I was also concerned that the bill would endanger the continued viability of small Internet Service Providers (ISPs) who do provide Internet access to customers in eastern Washington. I felt that the legislation provided insufficient oversight of the regional bell company's practices, by eliminating the role of the state public utility commission or the Federal Communications Commission. I ultimately cast my vote in support of consumer protection and full competition, and was not confident that the bill would deliver on either of these promises.

We also voted to go to conference on two bills: The Farm Security Act of 2002 (H.R. 2646), usually referred to as the **Farm Bill**, and H.R. 3448, the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Response Act of 2002.

SCHEDULE

Monday I was in Olympia to meet with state legislators and officials. Since the governor was in Washington, D.C. for a conference, I met with two of Gov. Locke's top policy advisers. I spoke to the pages and answered their questions. I met with Senate Majority Leader Sid Snyder. I met with the House Republican Caucus, as well as Sen. Jim West and the Senate Republican Caucus. I met with Secretary of State Sam Reed, Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland, and Secretary of Transportation Doug McDonald.

Monday night I took a red-eye flight back to be in for Tuesday meetings.

Members of the Washington Credit Union League met with me, including: Dennis Cutter and Jennifer Lehn of Numerica Credit Union, Susan Blain and Byron Edgett of Federal Credit Union, and Fred Rose of United Health Credit Union. Bob Playfair, Warren Zesiger, Chris Hesse, Pam Hesse, Dean Farrens, Mark Charlton, Joe and Kim Schmick, Dan Noteboom, Annie Lohman, Jeanne Youngquist from Washington Farm Bureau and Steve Appel, the vice president of American Farm Bureau, stopped by my office to discuss farm issues with me. I met with Jesse Keene, WSU's student body president, and Annie Brown, WSU's student body vice president, about financial aid concerns, Pullman transit needs, and the growing problem of credit card companies targeting college students. Several Veterans of Foreign Wars members stopped by my office as well. Joe King, former Speaker of the House in Washington state, and Elizabeth Swain, public policy director for Community Health Plan of Washington

stopped by to discuss health care issues with me. I met with Scott Cooper, Jody Dunn and Austin DePaolo of the Diocese of Spokane Catholic Charities at my office. I spoke over the phone with Jack Hockema, president and CEO of Kaiser about the effects of the company's bankruptcy on its Spokane workers and how I can assist Kaiser's Spokane operations to remain viable.

I was able to speak to the National Congress of American Indians legislative conference and gave them an update on health care issues affecting Native Americans. I attended an Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and later attended a Science Committee hearing on NASA's budget requests. Secretary of Interior Gale Norton testified at the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. Several members of the Washington State Association of Broadcasters, including Lon Lee and J. Birney Blair of KHQ, Darrell Blue of KAPP, Steve Herling of KXLY, and WSAB's president, Mark Allen, met with me to discuss broadcasting regulations and campaign finance reform. Bob Lohn, regional administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service also came by my office to discuss issues of concern in our region. I was able to discuss U.S. Hwy. 12 issues with Jim Kuntz and Ken Jantz of the Port of Walla Walla and Dan James and Eric Mondero of Ball Janik. Burnie Clark came to discuss the future of public television with me. Rep. Doc Hastings and I were able to meet with the Washington State Potato Commissioners.

I accepted two awards this week: One for being a "Champion of Small Business" by the Small Business Survival Committee, and the other for being a "Hero of the Taxpayer," from Americans for Tax Reform.

I heard informative testimony from Lt. General Ronald Kadish (USAF), director of the Missile Defense Agency, about America's vulnerability to ballistic missile attack needs at a Defense Appropriations subcommittee hearing. I also heard testimony on agriculture research, education and economics at an Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee meeting. I spoke to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association. Robert German and Kristen Lee of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation also came by my office to meet with me. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman discussed her department's priorities for this year with me and other members. Pat McElroy, Harv Forsgren, Jay Jensen came to meet with me about state and private forestry issues.

I met with a representative from Energy Northwest. Bill Morley from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce came to talk with me about class action lawsuits. Barbara Perry from the University of Washington came to talk to me about its funding needs. Colleen Cawston, Jeanne Jerred and Louella Anderson of the Confederated Tribes of Colville came to discuss tribal needs with me as well. Former Rep. John Porter, Mike Gilliland and Jess Munk with Hartson Law Firm and Bill Schmidt of Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation came to discuss medical research with me. I met with the Institute of Medicine to discuss a study I sponsored on the safety and efficacy of the anthrax vaccine. I also met with Rudy DeLeon, head of Boeing's Washington, D.C. office to discuss the status of the Spokane Boeing plant.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

I always enjoy hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you in any matter. Here are some of the ways you may reach me, especially if you know of others who may want to receive this report each week:

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